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ABSTRACT

California State University Bakersfield (CSUB) is a major and growing supplier of new teachers for Kern County, California. A program was developed to help new teachers, most of whom are not Hispanic, understand the 45% Hispanic school population in Kern County. It is important for teachers to know and understand what they can of the similarities and differences between Mexican and U.S. culture. This paper, which outlines a program for developing teacher knowledge, explains how the two countries developed, how the two cultures compare today, and why teachers need to know. It discusses the differences between the Mexican and U.S. education systems. (Contains 12 references.) (BT)

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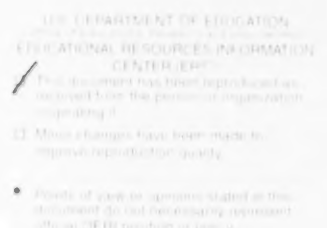

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Fulbright Travel 2000 to Mexico and Guatemala Project
Laurel B. Britton

Rationale for Project:

In California, as in many states, there are an increasing number of English Language Learners (ELL) entering the school system. Here in Kern County there are approximately 143,500 students enrolled in the K-12 school system and approximately 25,000 are limited English students. Of the LEP students almost 95% are Spanish speakers. Of those students the overwhelming majority are Mexican. In the Kern High School District, where I am employed, there are over 3,000 ELL students. They comprise 7% of the total school population. Again, over 90% are Spanish speakers and the vast majority are Mexican.

Unlike many communities across the countries that are changing to adjust to the influx of immigrants for the first time, Kern County has long been the destination for immigrants, especially from Mexico. There were Mexican land grants here and Mexican citizens before Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded this area to the U.S. Since then there have been an almost constant stream of immigrants from Mexico. Many Mexican Americans here date there relatives arrival to the turbulent times of the Mexican Revolution. Many others arrived here with the Bracero program in the 1940's and after. Because the backbone of the economy here has been and continues to be agriculture, Mexicans immigrating to this area have traditionally gone to work first here in the fields as seasonal farm workers. The farms and the "sheds" that handle the processing of agricultural products remain the major employers of newly arrived immigrants in this community. Although there are Mexicans from literally all of over Mexico living in Kern County, the majority have been and continue to be from Northern Mexico with the states of Michoacan, Nuevo Leon and Jalisco being the biggest contributors.

Unfortunately, despite the long standing presence of ELL in the community and school system, the local schools and districts here continue to struggle to serve their students. Presently Kern High School District has one of the highest high school drop out rates in the state. It has the second to the lowest proportion of high school graduates who complete requirements to attend California's CSU and UC system, and a very low college attendance rate. Other economic and social indicators are also poor with Kern County suffering from high unemployment rates and low medium income rates. Infant mortality is higher in Kern County than in any county in California.

Despite the fact that ELL students are not new in the community and perhaps because of the other problems facing the community, the school system continues to struggle with serving ELL students' needs. One problem the schools face is lack of multicultural staff and staff trained in methods of teaching ELL students. Even though over 45% of students enrolled in Kern County are Hispanic, over 84% of the teachers in the county are non-Hispanic or what is commonly here referred to as "white." In addition, the high school district seeks to fill openings for teachers in this community by interviewing and advertising extensively out of state. As a result about 10% of new hires in 1999-2000 were from out of state. This number is typical of recent years' statistics. The states from which the district received the largest number of teachers are in the Midwest, and include states such as Nebraska, Minnesota and Wyoming. Importantly, these states from which teachers are recruited do not have a significant ELL population and teachers coming from other states often lack not only experience working and living with minorities, but training in the area of English Language Development (ELD). At this time less than 20% of teachers in Kern High School District teachers are credentialled as BClad, Clad, ESL, or language development credential.

In addition to these issues, is the general issue of lack of general knowledge about Mexico, its history and its people on the part of U.S. residents and teachers. This is true even in California where we have a very sizable Hispanic population. This lack of knowledge, in part, comes from a

lack of emphasis in schools in the U.S. on the history of Mexico. For instance, in the 7th grade students study History, Medieval to Early Modern Times , and this includes a study of ancient civilizations of Mexico. The Freshman or Sophomore year California students study World History. In this course students should Latin American including a study a look at Mexico and issues facing indigenous peoples as well is social and political issues facing the country. The reality is that while a substantial number of 7th graders do actually learn about the ancient America, few Freshmen and Sophomore ever see the Latin American part of the World History curriculum. It is the last on a list of eleven major areas to be covered in that course. Even teachers who feel well prepared to teach this portion of the curriculum have expressed frustration in getting to it.

So, students here most often leave high school with little knowledge of Mexico. Although most college and university systems include general education requirements in social science subjects, many students never take courses in Mexico or Latin American history. In some cases this includes students who major in fields such as History. Many others never take language classes in college, another path of acquiring knowledge on Hispanic culture and history. I have been surprised to learn that many of my teaching colleagues not only never took a language class in college, but never took one in high school, or in fact, in their whole lives.

Goals for Project:

The local university, California State University Bakersfield (CSUB) is major and growing supplier of new teachers for this community. They have not only a teacher's credentialling program but various Masters programs in Education. They are also a major supplier of continuing education for teachers. The program that follows is intended to use with, preservice teachers, student teachers as well as teachers seeking to better their understanding of the Hispanic population here in Kern County. This program seeks to meet the concerns stated in the rationale section. The success of this program is intended to be measured and evaluated as a portion of preservice, teachers training or continuing education.

Program for Those Seeking Knowledge and Understanding of the ELD population here in Kern County:

The following is the narrative of the program I prepared to give to preservice teachers, student teachers, and teaching continuing their education. The actual program is delivered with the assistance of a Powerpoint presentation to include visuals as well as examples.

Narrative for Project:

Despite the fact that Mexico and the U.S. share a very long border, and much mutual history, they are not very dissimilar countries. They are different in many important ways and so are the people who live in them. It is important for teachers to know and understand what they can of these similarities and dissimilarities.

The U.S and Mexico and Indigenous Peoples:

•Despite the fact that both countries were settled and colonized after Columbus' arrival in 1492, the pattern of settlement, purposes and results of the English versus Spanish were distinct. The English and many other Europeans came particularly as settlers dating back to the Pilgrams in 1620. These early settlers came to escape religious oppression as well as to acquire land. They planned to stay. Although they encountered Native Americans, the Native Americans on the East coast of what is now the U.S., the numbers were relatively small and civilizations lacked the urbanization and technology. Despite the famous Pocahontas John Rolf story, most colonial settlers did not seek to marry or to form families with Native Americans. They considered them to be inferior.

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Although early America history is marked by contact and conflict with Native Americans, Europeans effectively took land and pushed Native Americans off traditional lands and across the frontier as they moved west. Vulnerable to European diseases, historians estimate that 90% of Native Americans in what is now the U.S. died within 100 years of European settlement. New England Native American tribes were virtually annihilated by disease in the early 1600's. The pattern of death by disease and pushing Native Americans that remained in a them in American history. Although Plains Indians made a valiant last attempt to hold on into the 1870's, Native American populations were crushed and in many cases exterminated far before this time. Today Native American make up .08% of the U.S. population.

The Conquest of Mexico took a different trajectory. It started early, in the 1500's, and the period of time over which the conquistadores invaded and conquered the Native Americans in Mexico and Mesoamerica was much longer. The development of government structures and political systems among Mesoamerican Indigenous peoples was far greater than in what is now the U.S. and the population is also believed to have been far greater. There history was old and their hold was strong. The Itza Maya did were not conquered until almost 1700 and Mexico continued to have problems with the Yucatec Maya in the Yucatan through the 1840's. Today there are problems relating to the still unresolved uprisings in Chiapas that started 1994.

Single men with the ambition to make their fortune and later priests who had the mission to convert the Native Americans were the early comers in Mexico. The Spanish spend several hundred years conquering and converting indigenous peoples. During this time they mixed with the indigenous population on a much greater scale. Unlike Pocahantas and John Rolf, the story of Hernan Cortez and Dona Marina, or La Malinche, became a standard of early Mexican History. Real colonization came later and was more a by product of the Conquest.

Although Mesoamerican indigenous people also succumbed by the thousands and perhaps millions to European diseases, in the end more of them survived the plagues than their Northern neighbors. Depending on the source and the definition used, anywhere from 10% to 30% of Mexico is termed "indigenous". The mestizo, or mixed population, is estimated as at least 55% of population.

What Does this Mean:
It is difficult to find the effect that Native Americans in the U.S. have on the U.S. and American culture today. Some historians argue for influence in modern Art and the modern environmental movement. The fact is, however, Native American influence in this country has been greatly limited. There are a lot of contributions factors on why, including racism and government policies toward Native Americans, but the most compelling reason that we can see little influence is that they died.

This is not the case in Mexico. Native Americans were there in large, urban populations with very sophisticated cities, and government and social systems. Their religious beliefs were in most cases entwined in their governmental and social systems and in many cases were fundamental to the culture. This meant a number of things for the Mexican culture that would emerge from Conquest.

First, it meant that Native Americans were accustomed to a system of government and social structure that was highly stratified. There was no tradition of democracy here. European society in general was not particularly socially mobile and the Spanish were even less socially mobile than the English. They brought this with them and the Native Americans in Mexico accepted this based on their past experience with power structures and government. Mexico today remains less socially mobile than the U.S.

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Second, Indigenous religious beliefs were not easily lost even in the face of the all out effort to convert. By most standards the Catholic church's attempt to convert Native American in Mexico to Catholicism was an extraordinary success. Despite a growing Protestant presence, 90% of Mexicans today identify themselves at Catholic. Mexican Catholicism has a distinct flavor, however, and the distinctness comes from the indigenous population. In what is referred to as religious synchronism, examples of indigenous influence in Mexican Catholicism are abundant . One of the more well written about subjects is the Juan Diego and Virgen of Guadalupe. There has also been much written on All Souls Days and Indigenous culture.

Third, folk culture has been preserved to a far greater extent in Mexico. This is the are both inside and out of the indigenous community. Folk tales and folk characters are common and much more universally discussed and accepted by a wide range of people in Mexico. Some of these folk legends have to do with religious conversations or appearances of Saints or Virgins. One of the most famous is the "Llorona" or wailing woman This lovely, but dangerous woman wanders the wanders the river banks wailing in mourning for her drowned children. Although there are many versions of the story, the most common version says that she steals children that she finds too near the river.

Indigenous peoples and those with indigenous heritage in Mexico were very conscious of gender and gender roles. Children and later young people were carefully taught were they fit into the community and the obligations that came with their roles. For instance, in many indigenous cultures, farming was and is the chore for men while meal preparation is a woman's role.

Indigenous peoples and those with indigenous heritage in Mexico hold different values than those that most mainstream American hold. This may include appropriate distance, mourning customs, and appropriate ways to speak.

What Does this Mean for Teachers or Why do you Need to Know this?

•Your ELD students are much more likely to be from indigenous families than your English speaking students. Importantly, this means they may retain the cultural and perhaps even the language of that indigenous group. There are 65 Native American languages spoken in Mexico. Although many indigenous languages speakers are bilingual and also speak Spanish, many are not. For instance, here in Kern County there are a large number of immigrants from Oaxaca. Oaxaca is an area of Mexico with a high population of indigenous peoples and in fact some of these immigrants are Mixteco speakers rather than Spanish speakers.

•Your ELD students may come from a world where gender roles are more sharply defined. Several years ago at my school site an developmentally disabled ELD student was placed in a vocational program that involved him helping in the cafeteria. He strongly rebelled and refused to perform the work. No one had considered that his background had taught him that women work in kitchens. Even a developmentally disabled young man did not want to do women's work.

•Your ELD students and in fact many of your Hispanic may have a lot of background in folk culture of Mexico. In a recent assignment I gave on writing about an incident in the past that involved your family I received a story involving the Llorona and one about construction workers in Michuacan being haunted by a ghost of a road construction worker who had been killed. I think it is important to accept these stories as part of culture and not question whether students "really" believe in a in ghosts or women who steal children. Similarly, a fellow teacher once told me that he had been asked by a third grade student "if he loved the Virgin." He told her that he wasn't even Catholic, and when

she didn't really understand the response and prodded some more he admitted that " he guessed he didn't love the Virgin." He knew he had made a mistake in the way he phrased his answer by the look on her face.

On the other end several years ago at Ridgeview High School I had an ELD student with a severe seizure disorder. In Mexico, many people still believe that seizure disorders are still the product of possession or hexes by witches and this student and his family sought traditional cures though herbal medication and "curanderos" or curers to purge the evil spirits. Other members of the staff, including a teacher who was epileptic and I did attempt unsucessfully to counsel the student toward medical treatment for seizure control.

•Your ELD and Hispanic students may have cultural characteristics that communicate things you may not always get or may seem confusing. The most classic characteristic that you see in texts on multiculturalism is the failure of Hispanic students to meet a teachers gaze or look a teacher in the eye. Culturally, this means deference and respect. Looking a teacher in the eye may for them communicate defiance. Among Hispanics in general grief, especially over a death, is often more severe. Among many Native American groups, including many indigenous groups in Mexico, verbal communication is sparse and there is more personal reserve than most Americans are accustomed to.

This knowledge and awareness may mean that you need to listen carefully when students do choose to speak. It also may mean that you should watch what you communicate. A young man of indigenous background once waiting after class to ask me if someone in my family had died. I guess the black skirt and grey blouse I had chosen was so severe to him that it suggested mourning attire. I decided not to wear that outfit again to class.

Again, an awareness is necessary but teachers must be careful not to allow cultural attributes to trap us into not paying appropriate attention to things we need to. In 1999 I had an ESL student who had a severe vision impairment. After a lot of frustrating delays, the student was interviewed and tested and it turned out he was legally blind and had been since childhood. Somehow this information had not been forwarded with his transcripts from another school in California. When I asked the counselor who did this student's intake interview if he hadn't noticed something was wrong with the kid's eyes, he told me he guessed he missed it because the student was very deferential and kept his eyes lowered. When I asked other teachers they also said they hadn't noticed because they had never seen his eyes.

U.S. Government and Mexican Government:

•Although the Mexican and U.S. governments are both democratic federal republics and the structures were inspired by the same Enlightenment philosophies, the political and governmental experiences of the two countries are very different.

In the U.S. revolutionary thinkers were successful between about 1750 and 1790 in chucking out the English and forming a new government based on the ideas of the Enlightenment. This 40 year process was marked by only a brief period of actual warfare. From 1790 on, the U.S. grew. It continued growing even in the wake of the U.S. Civil War which tore the young nation apart in the 1860's. Notwithstanding the Civil War, the nation grew in population and territory for about the next 100 years. Also despite the Civil War, and even when the spirit of democracy was not extended to women, and minorities, and through the nation's scandals, assassinations and period of distress, the commitment on the part of American leaders and its people to a democratic system of government nas never been in serious challenged.

This is not true in Mexico. The Mexican actual fight for independence, and then stability, was much longer. The move for independence began soon after the U.S. and French revolutions but indepen-

dence did not come until 1821 and the new Constitution was not adopted until 1824. In many ways the actual functioning of new government resembled the old Spanish one, expect that now elite Mexicans, not the Spanish were in charge. The intransigent government bureaucracy remained entrenched and government corruption was commonplace. Also, Mexico under Spanish rule had been a very prosperous colony for a very few people. This pattern did not change. Economic prosperity remained concentrated in the hands of a very few people.

The future of the new country was marked by continued problems. Leaders such as Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and later Porfirio Diaz who at first seemed to be democrats in favor of constitutional government, found they could entrench themselves as dictators. In 1850, Mexico lost a large portion of its land including California and what is now the American Southwest to the U.S. Under the pretense of collecting debt, the French invaded and occupied Mexico until 1867. As previously noted, problems with indigenous peoples continued and the Caste Wars continuing for more than ten years in the Yucatan and kept the Southern portion of the country in conflict. In 1910 the country was rocked by internal revolution and continued through 1920. The Revolution devestated the Mexican economy and it is believed that about 10% of all Mexicans immigrated to the U.S. during the Revolution to escape the violence and hardships. The last 70 years have been the most stable in Mexican history, but not without problems. Although significantly quieter at this time, the state of Chiapas has since 1994 been racked by violence from antigovernment insurgents.

Much of this time has also been marked by problems between the Mexican government and the Catholic church. At one time Catholicism was the state religion . Later all convents, monasteries, and church run schools have been closed by the government. Under Mexican law today it is illegal for a priest or nun to be seen on the street in their habit. The growing Mormon church continues to haggle with the Mexican government of the sanctiy of their temples located in Mexico. After the June election of Vicente Fox, the president elect's attendance at Mass made front page news in Mexican papers.

Although the Mexican government has been stable since about 1920, politics until recently have been virtually dominated by one political party, the PRI. In the last couple of elections, the PRI has long its stranglehold and lost the presidency for the first time in 70 years in last June's election. Many in Mexico have called Vicente Fox's recent presidential election the first democratic election in Mexico's history.

What This Means for Teachers or Why you Need to Know this:
Reasonably speaking, students who have been schooled in Mexico should understand the structure and system of government here. Mexican History is taught to children first at fourth grade level and they receive instruction in Government in Secondary or what we call Jr. High school. It is not difficult to transfer the knowledge of their three branches to ours.

On the other hand the legal system in Mexico is run on the Napoleonic law system and is drastically different than our own. Mexican courts and judges do not have good reputation and are not accountable by election. Mexican political analysts consider the legal system to be the weakest portion of their democracy. Your students may bring with them the bias against judges and the expectation that the people involved in the legal system are dishonest.

Bureaucracy remains much more complex and less efficient in Mexico. There is long history of rewarding jobs as political favors and of officials who work in their own and their friends and family's interest rather than the public interest. Carlos Salinas is only the most recent example of a public official accused of profiting at the expense of the Mexican people.

The problems in Mexican government contribute to a general "low trust" mind set on the part of many Mexicans. This means that Mexicans may be distrustful of your motives or ability to help. They may recheck details in a way that may seem insulting to the average American. They may try to try to get a favor or some accommodation by approaching various people on your campus or in your office. In Mexico, this works.

Mexican politics is very dynamic right now. Although neither Gore nor Clinton have made a campaign appearance locally, Vicente Fox did. Students will probably be aware of this.

Generally, anthropologists and those who study Mexican society think that multiple factors have combined to delay the arrival of true democracy to Mexico. In addition to the before mentioned things that the very stiff and nondemocratic structure of the Catholic church and the acceptance of this structure has delayed Mexicans demanding more true democracy. Also, many feel that indigenous people have been less likely to demand democracy because of their own histories. The ancient cultures of Mexico such as the Maya and Aztec were totalitarian not egalitarian. Mexican families even tend to be less democratic. Often, what the father says goes. No family meetings here. Of course, there is always the issue of the effect the U.S. had and continues to have on the course of events in Mexico.

Differences in the Mexican Education System and the U.S. System:

•Mexico enjoys a rising literacy rate. In 1990 the literacy rate was 69% nationwide and by 1995 it had risen to 77%. Most students, 90% attend public schools, and there are relatively few religious schools. Three years of preschool education are supported by the government and from 1990-91 to 1998-99 enrollment numbers in preschool have risen from 2.7 million to 3.3 million students. This marks a dramatic increase since the last three years mark the first time in recent history that the total number of students entering schools has not increased.

A major effort was made in 1992 to modernize education in Mexico. This legislation basically called for much more student centered learning and less emphasis on rote and memorization. As with any educational reform, Mexico, its students and teachers are still in the process of implementing changes mandated in this reform. Bilingual education is fairly new in Mexico and it came in with education reforms passed in 1992. Most language minority students are indigenous and there are generally bilingual teachers available to work in these settings. There are about 65 languages to be served. Special education programs are mandated. There is an active migrant labor education program in Mexico for farm workers as well as adult education programs.

Textbooks are available and distributed by the government to all school children. Bilingual textbooks in 65 indigenous languages are written at a local level and printed by and at the expense of the federal government.

In general, Mexican teachers are underpaid and come from the lower social and economic classes. Inservice or continuing education and learning opportunities have been dramatically increased since 1992. Traditionally elementary teachers have come through the Normal school system but Mexico is currently moving toward teacher preparation programs with college degrees. In some rural areas local education promoters are used. These are the equivalent for local teacher's aides who visit remote sites. After the 1992 reform legislation each state established a teacher resource center to provide materials as well as continuing education opportunities to teachers.

There are more choices for what we term high school or what Mexicans term upper secondary education. 87% of all students are enrolled in college preparatory schools. About 13% are enrolled in vocational or technical high schools. Vocational and Technical high school graduates can upgrade their educations to become eligible to attend a university. In practice, this is a rarity. Students in high school can often choose an alternative schedule for classes. For instance, some high school students choose an afternoon schedule, and go to school in the afternoon and evenings as opposed to mornings. There is usually very little choice of what to take. Students most often take supplementary education classes like computer keyboarding, English or music at their own cost and on their own time.

"The dia de la Bandera" or day for the flag is often celebrated on Mondays in Mexico. This is the day students do the Mexican flag salute and sing patriotic songs. There is also time dedicated to studying Mexican culture. Often, students dress differently for this day. For instance, in the Yucatan, the female students all wear their "huipil" or traditional muumuu of white on flag day.

Corporal punishment is no longer officially used in Mexican public schools. Traditionally teachers have been treated with respect in society, despite the fact they are poorly paid. This is, however, changing. Among the fifty teachers I met with all agreed that generally there are more serious discipline problems with students today than their were ten years ago. Specifically rural teachers acknowledged that punishments such as rapping a knuckle of a students head or grabbing a child's ear do happen in Mexican schools.

Although Mexican students do not study U.S. History as such, they generally study more about U.S History than U.S students study about Mexican history. They also hear more about the U.S. on the news in newspapers and on television in general. In addition, it is far more like that a Mexican student knows or has known someone who lives in the U.S. The long term nature of immigration has made this possible. Although there are many misconceptions also, there is generally a higher level of familiarity with the U.S. among Mexican students than with Mexico among American students.

What that means for Teachers

•About 70% of Mexicans live in cities but the majority of students who arrive here in Kern County as immigrants from Mexico come from rural areas. This is significant because there is big gap between those in Mexico who live in cities and those who live in rural areas. These differences can be traced through statistics as average income, number of telephones in the community and many other social and economic factors. Most significant for us as teachers is the gap in education. In 1998 according to the Mexican Secretary of Education although 70% of students in Mexico finish the 8th grade nationwide, students in rural areas finish in far fewer numbers. In some rural areas, especially those dominated by indigenous groups, 70% of students have dropped out of school by the 8th grade. The most powerful force fueling the drop out rate is economic need to work. There are also other factors. For instance, in many rural communities only a couple of scholarship students continue on to high school and that school may require a sizable commute or even that a student boards during the week. Also, many students and parents do not see what is taught in schools is relevant to them and their futures.

•Elementary schools, and in fact all schools, function on a longer school year than U.S. schools. They, however, have a shorter school day. Most often, especially in rural setting elementary school classes end at 12:30 or shorter after lunch. Depending on the community, absences for single days or for period for time are dealt with differently. In some communities failure to attend a required number of days results in a student failing and being held back a grade. In other areas students are welcomed back after any absence short or long.

Indigenous parents particularly don't see education as a shared experience and responsibility between educators, parents and teachers. Parents take the position that children can either be educated at home, or they can be educated at school. When they send their children to school, the school takes on the responsibility. Things don't get confused that way. Many rural parents and indigenous parents lack basic literacy skills do not feel able to help in academic setting.

•While there are trained special education teachers and students are regularly identified as in need of services, whether or not a student actually receives services is highly dependent on whether or not services are available in the area. For instance, it is relatively easy to identify a Down's child and test the level of mental retardation but getting a Down's child from a Guatemalan immigrant family who lives and farms in a rural area to an appropriate learning facility is often difficult. Again, the level of services available for city dwellers is vastly different than those available to rural Mexicans.

•School facilities in Mexico vary greatly. In rural areas they are usually cinderblock classrooms with a chalkboard. Although some schools are obviously better appointed, most have a minimum amount of equipment. Whereas here in the U.S. we may complain about copying facilities and limits, Mexican teachers and students are lucky to have any duplicating facilities available to them. In addition to the government supplied textbooks, in many very poor areas students are supplied with pencils and notebooks by the federal government, private charities, service clubs or groups such as the World Bank.

•Partially due to the public school's efforts on flag day, Mexicans are often more patriotic about their country than many Americans are. Folk dancing and traditional regional songs are still taught much more in the schools than they are here and the result is that students actually know how to sing and dance.

•Although not generally disrespectful, many Mexican children are not very used to minding or doing what they are told. Mexican parents and families are often very tolerant of small children. In addition, sometimes individual children within families are tolerated differently. For instance, if one child is always yelling, you may hear others in the family simple explain that he is the loud one. He may even to compared to another loud relative.
Often instead of issuing orders to their children, Mexicans bribe them or beg them to do what they are.told. As a last resort they often resort in physical punishment. Whereas I don't think you want to try begging, bribing , or spanking your students one thing that I can suggest is using less direct language. Spanish speakers, in general and particularly Mexicans, tend to be more polite in speech and less direct than Americans and English speakers. Whereas it is still appropriate to be direct in some circumstances, you may have more luck with "Welcome to class Trinidad, please sit down", than "I said sit down!"
Even though Mexicans are practically endlessly tolerant of small children, there does come a time at about age 12 that children are expected to start to act like young men and young ladies. Sometimes this transition seems a little abrupt to young people. You should know, however, that even the little guy whose parents called him "el chango" or "the monkey" when he was in kindergarten, will probably be expecting different things from him by about 6th grade.

•Despite the fact that Mexico is a very large diverse country, other than indigenous peoples, there are not many other minorities in most parts of Mexico. Most Mexican children attend schools that are essentially not multicultural. Also, students of limited economic means will not have had the opportunity to travel and see the diversity that really does exist within their own country. Students from rural areas frequently don't know that there are black Mexicans or that in other parts of the country

that Mexicans eat seafood. This means that teachers may need to redouble there efforts to teach tolerance and multiculturalism to ELD children. This is especially difficult since many Mexicans teachers all lack personal experiences with multiculturalism to draw from.

Conclusion:

Learning about another culture is a process and there are many ways to continue the process. Of course, as teachers, the first thing we may think of is taking classes. This is a fine way to continue learning and I encourage people to continue to learn in formal settings. There are excellent language classes offered here in town for teachers as well as excellent language schools in Mexico that cater to teachers. I was able to visit Mexico on a Fulbright-Hays Travel Scholarship for teachers. The program has been available since the 1950's and has in the past served Mexico as well as other Spanish speaking countries. Also, I suggest that you read some of the books referenced in this paper. If you feel like it is all new to you, Himilce Novas *Everything you Need to know About Latino History* might be a good place to start.

In addition to the formal opportunites, there are many opportunities available on a daily basis right here in this community for you to learn from. Recently Rigoberta Menchu spoke here in Bakersfield so I went to hear her speak. That did mean that I was one of the only non-Hispanics at a Hispanic Women's Conference. Attend or check out events that are put on by Hispanic radio stations or community groups. For magazines or other updates on Mexican popular culture, head down to the Mercado Latino one afternoon. Twenty five years ago the only news or television programming available in Spanish was out of L.A. by satellite from Mexico City. Right now I have access to at least three stations on my T.V. Watch the Spanish language channel on T.V. and read articles about the Spanish speaking world when you see them.

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